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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 August 2025

by **C Walker BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2025

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**Appeal Ref: APP/Q3630/W/25/3363574**

**Land adjacent to 34 and 50 Addlestone Moor, Addlestone, Surrey KT15 2QL**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
  - The appeal is made by Mr Michael J Gregory against the decision of Runnymede Borough Council.
  - The application Ref is RU.24/0512.
  - The development proposed is described as 'self build special needs sustainable zero carbon 3 bed bungalow with attached 2 car garage/storage'.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Preliminary Matters

2. Since the determination of the application, a revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published on 12 December 2024. Both parties have been able to make representations on these changes through their statement of cases.
3. A number of images, annotated plan extracts and plans have been submitted with the appeal. The Council have confirmed the plans upon which they based their decision, and I have determined the appeal on the same basis.

### Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
  - whether the proposed development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, having regard to the Framework and any relevant development plan policies;
  - the effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt;
  - whether any harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the proposal.

### Reasons

#### *Whether inappropriate*

5. The appeal site comprises a broadly triangular shaped parcel of land between the settlements of Addlestone and Chertsey within the Green Belt.

6. Policy EE19 of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan (adopted 2020) (Local Plan) sets out that proposals for changes of use of land may not be inappropriate development per se, but the change of use should have no greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing use.
7. The Framework sets out that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless it meets one of a list of exceptions. It is not part of the appellants case that the proposal meets any of the exceptions listed in paragraph 154 of the Framework.
8. Policy EE19 of the Local Plan also states that proposals for independent residential use of land are considered to be inappropriate development and harmful to the Green Belt in principle. However, paragraph 155 of the Framework sets out that the development of homes in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where all four of a list of criteria are met.
9. The first criteria set out in paragraph 155 of the Framework requires that the development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan.
10. Grey belt is defined in the Framework as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of following purposes; (a) to check unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; (b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; and (d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns, as set out in paragraph 143 of the Framework.
11. I am mindful that National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) provides helpful guidance on how the contribution land makes to the Green Belt should be assessed. Having regard to this, I find that in respect of purpose (a) the site makes a moderate contribution to the unrestricted sprawl of Addlestone. This is because the site lies adjacent to built-up development and is bounded by a road along the entire western boundary which would help to contain development and weakens its overall contribution.
12. The site forms a small part of a gap between Addlestone and Chertsey. There are dwellings adjacent and trees on the site that would assist in preserving the visual separation between the towns, such that I find it performs moderately in respect of purpose (b) of preventing neighbouring towns merging. My attention has not been drawn to any historic towns in the area so there is no need to consider purpose (d) any further.
13. The Council have provided me with part of a Green Belt Review, undertaken in 2017. This formed part of the evidence base to support the adopted Local Plan. I have not been provided with a methodology or scoring system. However, the mid-range scores attributed of 3 out of 5 in respect of both the checking unrestricted sprawl and the merging of towns, alongside the commentary and the Council's statement of case indicates a finding of moderate effects, which aligns with my own. Therefore, as the appeal site does not strongly contribute to any of the purposes of the Green Belt, it meets the definition of grey belt as defined within the Framework.

14. The second criteria (b) of paragraph 155 requires there to be a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed. In the case of housing, this means the lack of a five-year deliverable housing land supply (5YHLS). The Council have confirmed they are unable to demonstrate the necessary 5YHLS and whilst the level of shortfall is unknown, it nevertheless constitutes an unmet need in compliance with the criteria.
15. The third criteria of paragraph 155(c) of the Framework requires that the development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of the Framework.
16. The site is located in a semi-rural area where there is a lack of obvious footways to safely connect occupants of the proposed bungalow to the nearby towns of Addlestone and Chertsey. I have not been made aware of any available choice of transport modes that would assist in making the site more sustainable for occupants. Whilst I recognise that the opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, the evidence before me suggests the development would be heavily reliant on the use of the private car. It is not clear therefore, that the development would be located in a sustainable location, thus conflicting with paragraph 155(c) of the Framework.
17. As the fourth criterion (d) of paragraph 155 relates to major development, which this scheme is not, the 'Golden Rules' requirement of the Framework does not apply and I do not consider this further.
18. In the absence of an exception of other relevant criteria in the Framework to say otherwise, the proposed development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt in conflict with policies in the Framework. Whilst there is some inconsistency between Policy EE19 of the Local Plan and the Framework there is, nevertheless, conflict with the development plan for the area.

### *Openness*

19. The Framework does not define openness. However, as the fundamental aim of the Green Belt is to keep land permanently open, I infer it to mean the absence of urban sprawl and encroachment into the countryside.
20. The appellant refers to the appeal site as unkempt scrubland on the edge of the Green Belt. The site is relatively flat, open and containing unmanaged shrub, grassland and mature trees, one of which enjoys protection by preservation order.
21. Despite the bungalow being single storey, its scale and height would be considerable, even noting that it would be set lower than the surrounding roads. Introducing a new permanent building of this scale on a site currently devoid of development would spatially have an effect on openness. Whilst the set back of the built form into the site coupled with the presence of retained established trees around the site peripheries would go some way to diminishing the effect, the development would still be visible from the surrounding public realm, especially as tree coverage would be reduced to facilitate the development. Thus, the overall effect would be that the development would visually reduce the open nature of the site and erode the openness of the Green Belt.
22. For these reasons, the proposal would have a harmful effect on the openness of the Green Belt and attracts substantial weight in accordance with Paragraph 153

of the Framework. The scheme would also be in conflict with Policy EE19 of the Local Plan because it would have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing use

*Other considerations and Green Belt balance*

23. The appellant indicates a personal need for the proposed bungalow on medical grounds. Letters from medical professionals support the proposal but no evidence has been provided to set out what other less harmful options there might be to meet the specific needs of the appellant. For example, it is not clear to me why the bungalow must be located within the Green Belt. Limited detailed evidence has been provided as to why the appellants existing home, or indeed any other available dwelling could not be adapted to meet their specific needs. Therefore, having regard to this matter, I attach limited weight in favour of the appeal scheme to the personal circumstances of the appellant.
24. I have had due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) contained in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. This sets out the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it.
25. I have had also had regard to the appellant's family's right to the peaceful enjoyment of their possessions, and to a private and family life and home, under Article 1 of the First Protocol and Article 8 as set out under the Human Rights Act 1998. Dismissing the appeal would interfere with their rights under both Article 1 of the First Protocol and Article 8. However, these are qualified rights, and any interference may be justified where it is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society, applying the principle of proportionality.
26. The appellant asserts that part of the site had two semi-detached houses built there years ago. It is not clear precisely where this relates to, the timelines or the circumstances surrounding this matter. The Council's evidence makes no reference to any such dwellings within the appeal site. As such, I give this only limited weight.
27. The appellant points to there being no adverse effects in respect of matters such as sustainability, the impacts on trees, highway safety and parking. However, these are neutral factors that weigh neither in favour nor against the scheme.
28. The Framework requires me to give substantial weight to any harm to the Green Belt. I have found the proposal constitutes inappropriate development. This is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 153 of the Framework is clear that very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. Limited harm to the openness of the Green Belt has also been identified, but this is still harm.
29. Having considered all matters advanced, I have not found that any other considerations would clearly outweigh the harm I have identified. Therefore, the very special circumstances necessary to allow the appeal do not exist. Consequently, the appeal is contrary to Policy EE19 of the Local Plan and the Framework.

## Planning Balance and Conclusions

30. The Council confirm they are unable to demonstrate a five year housing land supply (5YHLS). The level of shortfall is not before me.
31. An inability to demonstrate a 5YHLS warrants the application of paragraph 11(d)(i) of the Framework which relates to the presumption in favour of sustainable development. In this case it means granting permission unless the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed. Footnote 7 includes land designated as Green Belt, which provides a strong reason for refusal. As such, the presumption in favour of sustainable development is not engaged.
32. The development would deliver a new dwelling that would help boost housing supply in the borough. Furthermore, the temporary construction jobs and post development economic benefits it would create, weigh in favour of the scheme. However, while important, a scheme for just one dwelling attracts limited weight.
33. On the other hand, the scheme constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would also, to a limited degree, adversely affect its openness. That is the totality of the harms. Notwithstanding, the Framework is clear that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness.
34. Drawing everything together, the proposal would conflict with the development plan, when read as a whole. Material considerations, including the Framework do not indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan.
35. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

*C Walker*

INSPECTOR